TL 4535

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RESOLUTION AGAINST GENOCIDE IN EAST TIMOR

Mindful of the death and destruction caused by the many instances of ethnic, religious and nationalist conflict in Central Europe, Central Africa and elsewhere around the world, the Jewish Labor Committee feels impelled to speak out on the ongoing yet little noticed tragedy unfolding in one corner of the world - East Timor.

Partially as a result of the indifference and inaction of the free world during the Holocaust years, and partially out of our historic experiences and traditions, the Jewish community has played a significant role in alerting the world against the crime of indifference to the suffering of people around the world, and the attempts at genocide perpetrated against others. The Jewish Labor Committee was instrumental in the formation of the Ad-Hoc Committee on the Genocide and Human Rights Treaties, and provided its staffing; this work played a leading role in the United States' ratification of the Convention on Genocide.

We cannot stand idle while innocent blood is shed. The Jewish Labor Committee wishes to go on record against the attempted genocide of the people of East Timor which has since the invasion and occupation of that tiny country by Indonesia in 1975 been the subject. of brutality of historic proportions.

According to a number of human rights agencies, it is estimated that approximately 200,000 East Timorese -- fully one-third of the civilian population of East Timor -- have been murdered since this illegal occupation. Human rights abuses by the Indonesian occupation forces and paramilitary have included the use of torture, forced resettlement and sterilization of civilians, the suppression of the religions and ethnic heritage of the citizens of East Timor, and the systematic killing of civilians, including the murder of women and children. Unconscionably, the Government of the United States has provided weapons, military training and, currently, financial support to the Indonesian Government while this brutality is taking place.

Such actions, contrary to international law, are also contrary to Jewish law and offensive in the extreme to us as a community and as members of the human community.

In light of the ongoing human rights abuses in East Timor, the Jewish Labor Committee calls on the Indonesian Government to immediately cease its campaign of torture, murder and genocide against the people of East Timor.

We are pleased to note that the Omnibus Appropriations Act of 1998, recently passed by both houses of Congress, bans the use of U.S.-supplied weapons in East Timor, and forbids IMET (International Military Education and Training) aid to the Indonesian armed forces. The Act also expresses Congressional outrage at the training of Indonesian soldiers under a different program, JCET (Joint Combined Exchange Training) and calls for a detailed report of all overseas military training to foreign militias conducted or planned by the Pentagon.

In light of the human rights abuses in East Timor, the Jewish Labor Committee calls on the United States Government to cease military and financial support of Indonesia, and make future support conditional on the cessation of these abuses. While the recent succession of Indonesian President Suharto by the current President Habibie may provide the possibility of a change in that country's policy towards East Timor, the Jewish Labor Committee supports - and calls on the United States Government to similarly supports - international initiatives to end the devastating human rights abuses in East Timor, particularly an immediate cessation of torture and murder of the people of East Timor. There is also a need for international human rights observers to monitor the withdrawal of Indonesian troops from East Timor.

We call on the U.S. Government to lend its good offices to actively work to end the Indonesian occupation of East Timor, a territory that had - until the 1975 invasion - been administered by Portugal. We support the East Timorese demand to be allowed to determine their own political status, in specific an internationally supervised referendum on self-determination to let the people of that land determine their fate.

The international community, through the instrumental of the United Nations, must work to end the devastation that has been wrought in East Timor, and, in an international act of solidarity, help rehabilitate and restore the communities and society of East Timor in the aftermath of over two decades of a brutal attempt at the destruction of a people.

The Jewish Labor Committee calls on the national and local agencies with which it is affiliated to educate their members and the public-at-large on the gravity of the ongoing tragedy unfolding in East Timor, and to voice their concern for the people of East Timor in their time of need.

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